

## Bert Cox Age 19

Herbert William George Cox was born in 1897 in Long Sutton and baptised in Holy Trinity on 4<sup>th</sup> July. He was the son of William and Elizabeth Cox – William is listed as a stonecutter. The 1901 census shows the family living near the Court House. Bert had a younger sister Annie born in 1899. Later the family moved to Hodge Hay on the Langport Road.



When he left school, Bert went to work in Yeovil, in the linotype department of the Western Gazette, and lodged with his grandparents for some of that time. When war was declared, he volunteered and was called up to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry in early 1916.

Writing from Blandford Camp on 27th May to his sister Annie, Bert described some of the training he was undergoing, including eight mile route marches and said he was looking forward to moving on to the camp at Swanage before embarking for France.

The Somerset Light Infantry took part in the Battle of the Somme which began on 1st July 1916, only ending with the onset of winter in mid-November. Despite a preliminary bombardment lasting seven days, the German defences were barely touched and the attack met unexpectedly fierce resistance. Losses were catastrophic and with only minimal advances, the initial attack was a failure. In the following weeks, huge resources of manpower and equipment were deployed.

The battle to take ground at Le Transloy Ridges lasted for the first three weeks of October and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry became involved towards the end of the engagement. The weather had deteriorated rapidly with heavy rain making the ground slippery and hard-going. Trench foot was rife. Bert Cox was killed in action on 20<sup>th</sup> October age 19 and has no known grave. He was believed to have been on active service in France for six weeks.

The Langport and Somerton Herald reported that when the news reached Long Sutton on 31<sup>st</sup> October, the flag flew at half mast on the school and the Minute Bell of the Church was tolled.

The Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20th March 1918 and have no known grave.

For God, For King & For Country.



PATRON  
Y.M.C.A. NATIONAL COUNCIL  
H.M. THE KING.

PATRON  
MILITARY CAMP DEPT  
H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

Reply to \_\_\_\_\_ Company \_\_\_\_\_ Bat \_\_\_\_\_ Regt \_\_\_\_\_

Stationed at \_\_\_\_\_

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Pte. H. Cox,  
No. 22644,

C. Company,

9th Bn. S. L. I.

Blandford Camp  
Dorset.

May 24<sup>th</sup> 1916.

Dear Annie,

Just a line to you thanking you for the letter and card you sent me, for I was very pleased to hear from you. I hope this will find them all quite well, and I'll bet that young Eric is a mischievous boy by now. I expect you all miss my jaw down there. I suppose Uncle Joe is busy with the garden now, that's a thing I miss this time. Well I'll tell you I had a few letters and cards that day, and the chaps in the hut thought

that my name was never going to end. Army life is far different from home life, but I am happy as a lark. I expect by next week we shall be shifted to Swanage, a nice place by the sea, they say. This is a big camp up here, and wherever you look you are sure to put eyes on tents and huts. We have plenty of food, and good stuff too. Walter Bryant is quite all right, and sends on his kind love to you all down there. I don't expect we shall have a leave for a long time yet, but if we do it will be only a week-end. We go on route marches every Tuesday and Friday about eight miles, and I get tired by the time I get back. Well I have no more to say at present, so good bye with love from Bert to you all. Don't forget to write to me now and again, and I will answer. — Good bye for the time.